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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

Creation of the Advisory Unit in the U.S. Army

By

Charles Jack

MAJ, Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

The recent and future increase in the need for the advisor mission warrants creation of a permanent advisor organization and further modification of the training provided to Iraqi military and security personnel. Based on examples from our past military history and current mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, the creation of the advisor unit will greatly enhance the capabilities of our military and produce quality foreign security forces to deal with future challenges. The Army's experiences in Iraq gave the military many lessons to begin development of doctrine and force structure for the advisor missions. With special operations forces over-burdened with hyper-kinetic missions as well as advisor missions, the conventional army must assume the advisor role. The counterargument addresses career alignment, size, and leadership challenges.

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Introduction

The United States military conducted numerous military assistance and foreign training missions throughout its history. The idea of increasing foreign military and security force capacity through assistance and advisor missions is not new and does not create new challenges for the combatant commander. Additionally, the needs of the combatant commander may be different for each region or country, but the supporting military and interagency institutions require a base institution to initiate operational training missions. Current structure and functional characteristics of Iraq military transition teams (MiTTs) do not reflect the wealth of historical lessons learned and as a result, function under less than ideal circumstances and in some cases do not meet the combatant commander's intent.

The recent and future increase in the need for the advisor mission warrants creation of a permanent advisor organization and further modification of the training provided to Iraqi military and security personnel. Although the historical location of the support to foreign internal defense (FID) mission resides with Special Operations Forces (SOF), the current task of creating two countries' military and security capabilities simultaneously forced the Army to move the mission partially to conventional forces and focus SOF on hyper-kinetic engagements and training of Iraqi and Afghan SOF.

The advisor mission and quality of training provided impacts directly on the speed the US military will be able to reduce forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and future military missions. Experts in the arena, such as LTC John Nagl, agree the advisory mission is a growth industry due to the increase in weak and failing states around the globe.

This discussion is divided into four parts; the analysis of the issues and problems, the analytical conclusions, recommendations, and counterarguments with respect to the

challenges and possible solutions for the advisor mission. Due to the short length of the paper, the detailed analysis of current advisor training, with exception for length of specialty staff training is not covered.

Discussion/Analysis

The discussion section covers why the Army advises foreign militaries, the definition of foreign internal defense (FID), history of the mission, current structure of training teams, guidance from senior commanders, and advisor observations.

Why advise? The number of weak and failing states has risen dramatically in the past two decades. Reasons for the increase include collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, rise of extremism, economic disparity and terrorism. To increase stability in weaker countries amicable to the United States, the US military, under direction from its civilian leaders, deployed and will continue to deploy to train and assist their military and security forces in the past and future respectively. The United States, as the dominant world power, trains foreign military forces to fight insurgencies within their own borders.

Definition. The advisor mission falls under “support to foreign internal defense” (FID). Joint Publication(JP) 3.07 defines the term as the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. To put is in layman’s terms, the military increases the capacity for maintaining the peace and defeating insurgency through the training of its forces and resourcing operations and material.

LTC John Nagl explains, “The best way you win a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign is you don’t-you help the host nation defeat the insurgency.” In many cases, US forces could bear the brunt of the fighting but risks relinquishing gains upon departure. In other words, the Army could win the short term fight, but unless the insurgency capitulated, opportunity for resurgence is always present. More often than not, the indigenous forces are not capable of maintaining the fight without significant investment and training over a long period of time.¹ Apart from the security forces, the local populace must understand that an effective military will be present to ensure security for the long run, otherwise the population will in some part coalesce to the insurgent cause.²

History of the advisors. The U.S. Army continuously evolves. Just within the last century, the Army moved through five major transformations based on the expected needs of combat during the relevant era. Some of these included the Pentomic or Reorganization of the current infantry division (ROCID) in 1957, Reorganization of the Army Division (ROAD) in 1963, Force XXI in the late 1990s, and the latest Combined Arms Battalion and Brigade based structures. The military leadership analyzed the formations facing the US Army and evolved.³ The adhoc production of the Military Transition Teams in Iraq and the Embedded Training Teams in Afghanistan is another transformation and product of the combat needs of the military and the Army.

Within the post-combat and pre-combat arenas, the advisor mission continually existed, waxing and waning in importance as needed. During the Vietnam War, the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MAC-V) existed to coordinate the training and combat advisor mission of the US military and the Army of South Vietnam. A product of Vietnam, the Military Assistance Officer Program (MAOP) created tailored training for advisors based

on the type of trainee unit. For example, ARVN artillery unit received an officer trained in the artillery MAOP track; an ARVN infantry unit received a MAOP infantry officer. But, the Army leadership shelved the entire program following the war, choosing to focus resources on conventional warfare training and operations.

More recently, Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) conducted support of FID in El Salvador. Over a period of 12 years from 1980-1992, the El Salvadoran military defeated the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FLMN) with the assistance and training of the US government and SOF. Additionally, SOF supported FID missions in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Columbia. ⁴

Current structure of teams. Today, SOF and transition teams organize based on the specific FID mission. The size of each team differs based on the type of unit to instruct and where the mission will take place. For instance, in Iraq, a battalion team is comprised of eleven men from across the occupational specialty spectrum and is equipped with three up-armored high mobility multi wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs). An Iraqi brigade (BDE) receives only ten men and three HMMWVs. Training Team compositions differs between Iraq and Afghanistan and Afghan Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) often pair with a SOF Alpha-detachment. At the higher levels, a similar structure is present; ten or eleven men supervising staffs, often regardless of immense size.⁵

Beginning with the training, each team completes mobilization training (if soldier is National Guard), a two month advisor course at Fort Riley, KS; Kuwait theater training, and the Phoenix Academy, which teaches the latest COIN tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). During the entirety of the training regimen, instructors provide two days for specific lessons on how the Iraqi and Afghan armies operate in logistics, medical and

personnel.⁶ This formal process began with several disjointed attempts at training the advisors. During its infancy, the training included two weeks at Fort Hood supported by National Guard instructors and in another attempt, two weeks of self training by observer-controllers at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany prior to deployment. None of the present courses meet the in-depth rigors as previously outlined in the MAC-V training regimens during the waning days of Vietnam.

In Iraq's situation, the Iraqi Assistance Group (IAG), under command of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) takes control of the team and pairs the team with its Iraqi counterparts. Each team receives logistical support from its higher headquarters and from the supported local BDE in the area of operations. The local US BDE often provides, in majority of the teams, needed combat support and logistical resupply. The supported BDE often provides direct support to its Iraqi counterpart in the area and also augments the training team with personnel and equipment as needed. Several former team members realized the level of support they received from the local coalition BDE commander was proportional to his perception of the MiTT mission importance.⁷ Rather than the norm, MiTT chiefs negatively commented they *may* receive training support from the BDE or its higher headquarters in the form of military planning courses for the host nation military.

If a training team is not available for an Iraqi unit, the Army, through MNC-I often tasks the Army brigade in that sector to provide the team from its own personnel. Additionally, when a MiTT needs personnel to complete its team, the local BDE must often provide those out of its own companies and staff. This means a BDE must degrade its own

mission capability by tasking its own people away from their regular jobs during the combat tour.⁸

Guidance. Throughout an advisor's training courses, commanders and instructors issue guidance on how the mission should progress and how the advisors should conduct themselves with their counterparts. Letters from the commanders of MNC-I, MNF-I state that advisors must mentor and support transition to a self sustaining military and police force. The welcome letters further impress on advisors to not allow corruption, or supplant the Iraqi or Afghan commander with the teams' own capabilities.⁹

Although summarized above, the advice and directives provide advisors with the knowledge that their performance correlates with the success of the coalition missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The by-product of their success is the decrease in needed U.S. forces and the redeployment of thousands of US forces to their home bases.

Field observations. The push for more Iraq and Afghan forces to become self sufficient and effective on the battle field has produced disjointed products. One advisor, after returning from his year tour, stated that his greatest accomplishment was keeping the unit together. The Iraqi battalion he advised shrank from 700 to 400 soldiers while the brigade decreased from 2400 to about 1600 soldiers. Aside from high casualties, the unit suffered tremendously from desertions. The most likely reason for desertions was the lack of confidence in their officers and NCOs. The advisor further identified the lack of supervision from Iraqi higher headquarters to correct corruption and nepotism built into the system.¹⁰

Common to most interviews, advisors found a lack of knowledge of logistics, personnel matters, and wanton desire to avoid detailed staff work among Iraqi military staffs. An advisor commented the lack of a contracting process and payment system allowed a

battalion to go without a food contractor for nine days.¹¹ Another unit maintained over seventy soldiers on its rolls who no longer reported for duty but accepted and did not return the cash salaries from the Ministry of Defense.¹² Numerous advisors commented on coercion methods used to get the operations staffs to plan combat operations and write operations orders greater than two days in advance and fully brief their subordinate units.¹³

The common trend throughout the researched advisor interviews was coalition and Iraqi commanders pushed Iraqi and Afghan security units into the field prior to completion of needed training. The resulting reliance on advisors was somewhat built into the system and Iraqi and Afghan forces are unwilling to “move out of the house.”

Analytical Conclusions

Impact on current force structure. Initially, the Army chose to use an Army National Guard Training Division for the Iraqi transition mission. Following the deployment, interviews with the division leadership showed positive remarks but also some areas for improvement.¹⁴ Little training, in comparison to current MiTT pre-deployment training existed and with the mobilization and deployment, many National Guardsmen were not prepared to enter combat so quickly. General Petraeus commented the initial unit was “allowed to grow with its counterpart Iraqi Army units” and later said they “may not be the best fit.”¹⁵

The active duty force is better suited for the training mission and its rigorous combat requirements. But, over 7,000 officers and NCOs currently fill the mission requirements for OIF and OEF with only disjointed family support structures. The Army gives advisors the option of moving their families to Fort Riley, maintaining their current location or if known,

moving the family to their next duty station. For example, one team maintained their families in six different military installations across Europe. Additionally, local US Army brigade commanders rate officers and NCOs serving on battalion level MiTTs. This places the MiTT at a great disadvantage to those soldiers who have constant exposure and trained at home station with the commander. In other words, the BDE commander is likely to rate those officers he knows and works with on a daily basis than those he may rarely see, such as the MiTT officers. Many critics of the current training mission are concerned that Army leaders choose the best officers for combat duty while “second choice” officers and NCOs accept the training team assignments.¹⁶

Needs of the operational commander. In many cases, the Iraqi military saw the trainers’ presence as an excuse to decrease the needed amount of staff work participation, depending instead on the trainers for planning and resourcing operations. This was often opposite of the intent provided by commanders at IAG and MNF-I. By allowing this continued reliance, the Army slowed the development of Iraqi and Afghan forces.¹⁷ Recognizing the situation, GEN Petraeus gave additional emphasis to this idea when he included it in his guidance, “when you take defacto command, know that you are hindering and not helping the mission.”¹⁸

GEN Petraeus was one of a handful of officers that initially studied the mission and its requirements and ironically now indirectly commands that entity in Iraq. He developed the request for forces document and laid out a plan of action for the future of the IAG. Theoretically, the staff of the advisory unit would be linked into the reconstruction headquarters and most likely follow closely behind combat troops into Iraq. There would be no need for analysis and “re-invention of the wheel”, as GEN Petraeus and his staff did in 2004.

Staff Training. The “plug and play” methodology in Iraq did not meet expectations. The lack of training given to unit staffs forced training teams to start at the basics, learn how the Iraqi army operates, and then turn around and teach their counterparts. A mediocre commander can do a good job if he has a capable staff but a mediocre commander and sub-par staff is risking US and Iraqi lives.¹⁹

Size of Advisory teams. The vast majority of the sources referenced identified the size of the teams as too small to effectively accomplish the mission. The mission for the BN and BDE teams often calls for the advisors to be in numerous locations at one time. This hampers operations in urban situations where buildings must be cleared and held individually and throughout the operation.²⁰ Movement to multiple locations is relative to the equipment and vehicles issued to each team. Current force protection policies in Iraq require a convoy to include at least three vehicles. With three HMMWVs, the team is limited to a single convoy or they must request assistance from their Iraq counterparts or the local coalition force.²¹

Even at the Corps levels, the initial teams’ ability to effectively train Iraqi personnel to administer the massive operations of the security forces was lacking. The teams were unable to provide the needed supervision to stop the incursion of corruption now present in the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. The teams could better execute the combatant commander’s intent if they were larger and trained in tactical as well as administrative assistance.

Lost lessons. After WWII, the United States executed reconstruction and supervisory operations across the globe. During Vietnam, the Army created MAC-V and MAOP. After Desert Storm, the Army deployed conventional force officers and NCOs to Middle Eastern

countries to train and assists militaries. The Army currently runs the risk again of losing the vital lessons learned of past advisory missions.

Recommendations

Make the Advisory units permanent. The future advisory unit should be divided into independent scalable groups to allow for modification to fit the particular mission and relief during long duration missions. As a permanently established unit, all regular command functions would be performed, such as evaluations for its members. The unit would write and maintain its own library of doctrine and lesson plans both used in the past and sample plans for future operations. The unit would work closely with the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) to capture OIF and OEF lessons learned. At the Army level, the creation of a functional area, specialized career track followed by officers of the rank of major and above, would solve many issues with concerns over promotion and further advancement in the Army. The result of the advisor group's creation would present trained personnel who are familiar with the mission and the culture, such as those recommended by the current commander of the U.S. Marine Special Operations' Foreign Military Training Unit.²²

Increase size. Given the current sizes for the Iraqi battalion and higher transition teams at eleven and ten respectively, increase the number of personnel and equipment assigned to the teams to allow for greater maneuverability and flexibility on the battlefield.²³ For example, at the battalion level, the team leader would remain a major with nine to ten captains with NCOs duplicating responsibilities of the officers. The increase in size would allow for increased coverage of combat operations and the ability to provide greater assistance to fledgling security forces.

Expanded mission. To better support the host nation and US mission, expand the role of the advisor at higher levels. Currently, coordination for equipping and providing training on new equipment lies within the purview of the U.S. Ambassador's Defense Attaché assigned to diplomatic country team. In a deployed advisor group, the senior advisor having gathered information from his subordinate trainers, would be better prepared to provide adequate needs and requirements when the host nation prepares to choose new equipment and how to train its soldiers.

The military seeks to more closely integrate its actions with the Department of State and places greater emphasis on the ideas behind the theater security cooperation. The inclusion of the advisor with the country team would improve the overall cooperation product and mold the host nation's military to assist the cooperative actions if indoctrinated from the ground levels. More simply, if integrated into the combatant command philosophy for the region, the overall product improves.

Staff training. Although the operational analysis should not focus on training, the analysis of Iraq and the IAG would not be complete without the mention of training for the Iraqi security staffs. Aside from corruption, the staffs at all level lack the training to execute their jobs. Specifically, the Iraqi military should train its medical units to higher standards greater than current basic life saving skills. Logistics personnel should be trained on creation of and maintenance of logistics contracts for such items as provision of food and transportation. Planning staffs currently receive rudimentary training on the military decision making process. Increase the instruction on troop leading procedures and planning process. Analyze and create workable solutions to better pay the correct number of soldiers in each unit. On average, the Ministry of Defense provides commanders with more pay than the number of

soldiers in each unit, allowing great opportunity for corruption and theft. One advisor explained how a battalion commander reported approximately one hundred more soldiers on his roles than actually present. When he accepted the cash payroll directly from the Ministry of Defense, as is the norm, and kept the extra, he grossed about \$100,000 per month. Only accuracy in the personnel system and strict adherence to the regulations can prevent theft of this magnitude.

The creation of more efficient staffs better prepares the Iraqi officers and NCOs to assume effective roles in their country's military and reduce their overall reliance on US and coalition forces for logistics and combat support.

Counterarguments

Operational Tempo. Critics of the permanent advisor organization argue the unit would be in a state of perpetual deployment. High numbers of deployments is something the Army would have to endure. Already new recruits into the Army are told of the possibility of multiple deployments during their service. Additionally, the Advisor Corps would have to accept and relish the constant real world mission engagement as did the previous owners (SOF).

SOF “owns” the FID mission. The Army Chief of Staff, General George Casey, argued this mission will not exist to the current scale in the near future; “I’m just not convinced that anytime in the near future we’re going to decide to build someone else’s army from the ground up, and to me, the advisory corps is our Army Special Forces—that’s what they do.” This expanded mission may not be his decision. Recent Department of Defense directives state that Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) “shall be given priority

comparable to combat operations.”²⁴ It further states, “develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, develop greater means to help build other countries’ capacity,” and “ensure the Armed Forces have the training, structure, processes, and doctrine to train, equip, and advise large numbers of foreign forces.”²⁵ The rising star in the COIN arena, GEN Petraeus commented that an existing structure would expedite and improve the capabilities of advisors.²⁶ Granted, the Army may not conduct a training mission of this scale again for many years, but then again, it does not conduct large scale conventional operations on a regular basis either.

Manpower. The manpower required would hamper the Army’s ability to continue the expansion of the conventional force.²⁷ This counter argument is true, but as the transition from “young” forces to a standing effective security force continues in Iraq, the need for US conventional brigades will decrease. It is feasible that by the time the planned brigades come online, the original need will not be present or at least be less.

The experience factor of our younger officers and NCOs must not be overlooked. With the application of that experience on new or weak militaries, the opportunity for massive occupation requirements would decrease. In other words, the Army’s officers and NCOs learned how to mentor a young military and how to make it more effective in less time. Will the time required for defeat of an insurgency decrease with the advisory unit? Historical examples show the average time needed to defeat an entrenched insurgency is eight to ten years, although Iraq and Afghanistan may take longer. But, if the advisory unit is present and the structure in place, the time needed to generate those transition teams becomes much shorter and produces a better and more efficient product in the end.

Conclusion

The Army is not the same army of the late 1970s and early 1990s. The lieutenants that lead platoons into Iraq and Afghanistan during the past seven years turned around and commanded companies on the same ground a few years later. The amount of experience developed during the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan resulted in the development of new doctrine and movement away from the conventional strategy requiring massive numbers of combat brigades.

Experts agree the most likely forms of combat in the future will involve the development of and assistance of security forces to fight non-state actors. Insurgents and terrorists will probably not use tanks and helicopters in mass formations to conduct military operations. As demonstrated in Iraq and Afghanistan, the foe will prey on weak government institutions and exploit untrained security forces. More combat brigades would definitely add to the psychological impact on foreign countries. But, to win, the host nation's military and security forces must fight that war and not the occupation army. In order to defend themselves, foreign military and security forces need the guidance and training available in the U.S. Army. The assistance and training arena is a growth industry and it will pay great dividends as the world shifts toward less stable governments and ineffective militaries. The Army must be prepared to meet those needs through the development of the advisor and relevant institutions.

Notes

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²² Ibid.

²³ Nagl, LTC John A., "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps," Center for New American Security, (June 2007), 6, <http://www.cnas.org/en/cms/?145> (accessed 22 March 2008).

²⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.05, (Washington, DC: 28 November 2005), 3.

²⁵ Ibid, 2.

²⁶ Petraeus, GEN David, Commander, Multi National Force-Iraq, to Iraqi Security Force Transition Team Members, 8 May 2007.

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Acronyms

BDE	Brigade
CENTCOM	Central Command
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force-7
CMATT	Coalition Military Assistance Training Team
CMTC	Combat Maneuver Training Center
COIN	Counterinsurgency
ETT	Embedded Training Team (Afghanistan)
FA-TRAC	Foreign Army Training and Assistance Command
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corps
MAC-V	Military Assistance Command-Vietnam
MAOP	Military Assistance Officer Program
MATA	Military Assistance Training Advisory
MiTT	Military Transition Team (Iraq)
MNCI	Multi National Corps-Iraq
MNFI	Multi National Force-Iraq
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
OC	Observer Controller
RFF	Request for Forces
ROAD	Reorganization of the Army Division
ROCID	Reorganization of the Current Infantry Division
TSB	Training Support Brigades
TTPs	Tactics, techniques, and procedures

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